

WASHINGTON, D.C. - The House and Senate voted today to override a presidential veto that would have slashed Medicare reimbursement rates to doctors across the country. The override means that the Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act is now law.

"Today, both chambers of Congress sent a clear message to the president: When it comes to our seniors and our health care providers, the two parties stand together," Rep. Farr said. "I've worked closely on Medicare reimbursement issues for years and I'm pleased that we were able to avoid this painful cut."

The legislation will

- Replace a 10.6 percent payment cut for thousands of doctors in Medicare with a 1.1 percent increase.
- Extend expiring provisions and bonus payments critical to rural communities and providers.
- Expand the preventive services that are available to seniors.
- Phase mental health parity into the Medicare program.
- Improve protections and assistance programs for our low-income seniors.

This legislation, however, was missing one key provision that would have benefited Central Coast doctors. Because of outdated formulas used by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, doctors in Monterey, Santa Cruz and San Benito counties are reimbursed at lower rates than doctors in neighboring areas.

"I have worked with local, state and federal health care experts and legislators to try to correct this oversight, but the fix for our doctors was left out of this bill," Rep. Farr said. "I will continue to work on this issue and push a stand-alone bill I introduced last year. We must preserve access for our senior citizens, which means we must have a fair Medicare system."

The House voted 383 to 41 to override the veto. The Senate vote was 70 to 26.

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